

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes the extent to which the proposed project may alter neighborhood character. Neighborhood character is considered to be an amalgam of various elements, including land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic and/or noise. Following the guidelines of the 2010 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, the assessment in this chapter focuses on the defining elements that contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

The assessment provided in this chapter examines neighborhood character within a 400-foot study area around the project site and concludes that overall, the proposed project would not adversely affect neighborhood character despite increases in traffic. Instead, the proposed project would improve neighborhood character by transforming the vacant theatre into an active use, enlivening this area of Flatbush Avenue.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

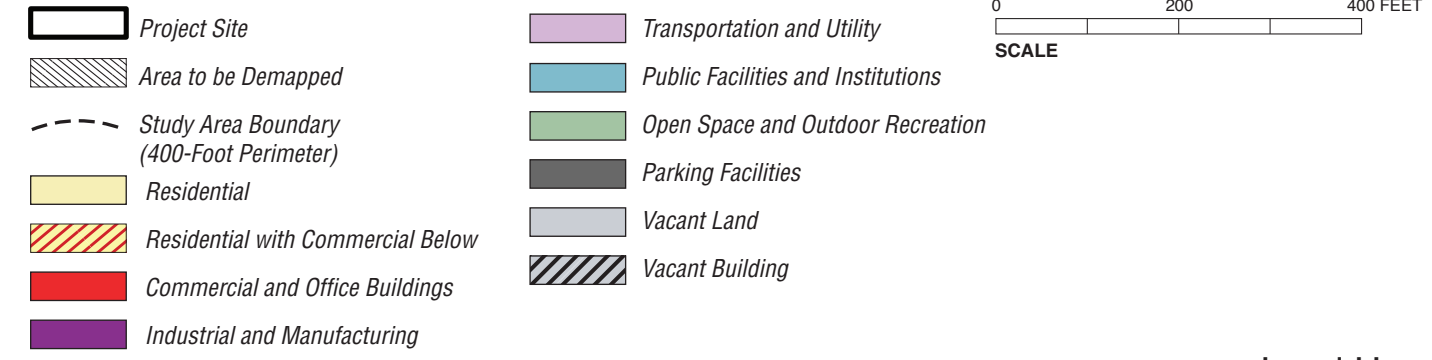
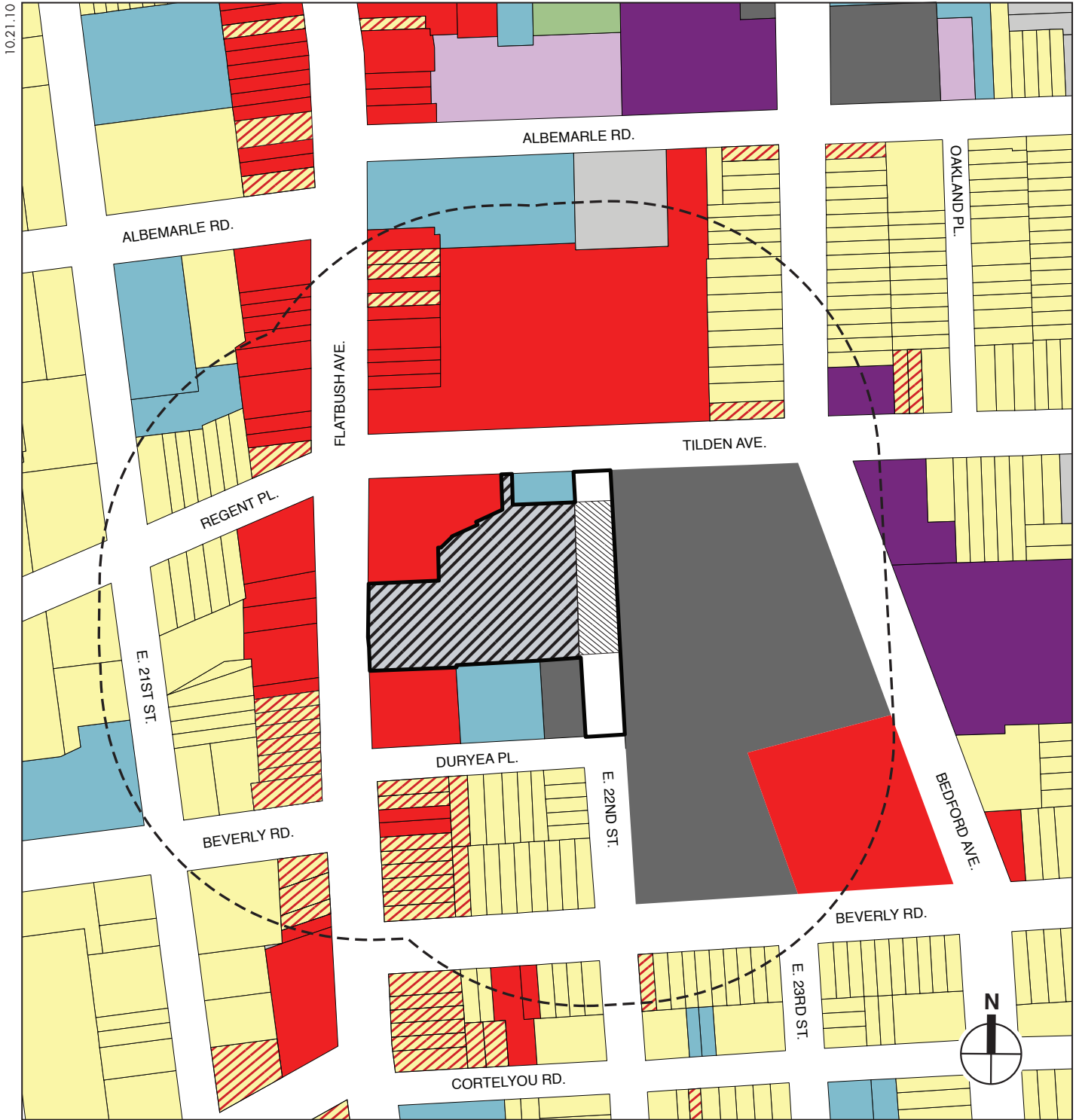
The existing character of the project site and the neighborhood that surrounds it is defined in large part by the busy Flatbush Avenue commercial corridor, though it does contain some residential and institutional uses, as well as vacant land (see **Figure 6-1**).

The project site currently contains a closed movie theater that was built in 1929. Large commercial uses dominate the study area immediately surrounding the project site. The Sears Roebuck shopping center and associated parking lot are immediately east of the project site and comprise the full block bounded by Beverley Road to the south, Tilden Avenue to the north, Bedford Avenue to the east, and East 22nd Street to the west. Just north of the project site, on Tilden Avenue, a large commercial complex houses a Super Stop & Shop food store, Bally's gym, Old Navy, and Staples.

Neighborhood retail uses are also present in the study area. Flatbush Avenue is the area's main commercial corridor and contains neighborhood commercial uses, such as beauty salons, eating establishments, and clothing stores.

The surrounding neighborhood includes a mix of residential and community facility uses. However, it is the commercial uses that have the greatest influence on the character of the area.

Residential areas are concentrated in the western and southern portions of the study area, with some residential uses also found in the northeastern portion of the study area. Along Beverly Road within the study area, residential uses are characterized by attached and detached two- to three-story townhouses. West of Flatbush Avenue, residential uses are generally three- to four-story apartment buildings, with one larger, seven-story apartment building on the southeast corner of Beverly Road and East 21st Street. Along Bedford Avenue within the northeastern portion of the study area, residential uses are generally three-story apartment buildings. South of this residential area, on the east side of Bedford Avenue, there are several auto-related industrial uses.



There are also a number of community facilities in the study area. There is a church on Tilden Avenue adjacent to the project site, just north and west of the portion of East 22nd Street that is proposed to be demapped. The Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS) Yatzkhan Center, a mental health and substance abuse facility for adolescents, is located at 19 Duryea Place, also adjacent to the project site. The Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is located on the southeast corner of Flatbush Avenue and Albemarle Road; the Salem Missionary Baptist Church is at 305 East 21st Street between Albemarle Road and Regent Place; and St. Marks Methodist Church, as well as the Ghana Wesley United Methodist Church are located on the north side of Beverly Road between Ocean Avenue and East 21st Street.

There are no previously identified architectural resources in the study area. However, in addition to the existing theater, five individual properties in the study area appear to meet the criteria for listing on the S/NR and/or NYCL designation. There are also several groupings of rowhouses and multi-family dwellings throughout the study area dating to the early 20th century that are architecturally distinguished and may also meet S/NR criteria.

The study area is mostly developed in the typical Brooklyn grid pattern with busy commercial avenues running north-south and narrow streets running east-west. Flatbush Avenue is the primary commercial thoroughfare in the study area, and is a highly-trafficked two-way avenue with metered parking along both sides of the street.

The streetscape of the study area is urban in character, with relatively wide sidewalks and heavier pedestrian and vehicular traffic along the avenues and lighter activity on the side streets. The majority of the study area's pedestrian and vehicular traffic is concentrated along Flatbush Avenue. The study area includes typical street furniture, including newspaper stands, parking meters, phone booths, and garbage bins. Noise levels along the avenues are generally high, especially along Flatbush Avenue, and reflect the busy level of vehicular traffic on area streets.

C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Absent the proposed actions, the Kings Theatre is expected to remain in its current condition as a vacant building and the portions of East 22nd Street would not be demapped. There are no known developments currently scheduled for completion within the 400-foot study area by 2014.

Therefore, neighborhood character is expected to remain substantially similar to existing conditions.

D. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

According to the 2010 *CEQR Technical Manual*, it is unlikely that a project would have neighborhood character impacts in the absence of an impact in any of the relevant technical areas. As described elsewhere in this EIS, with the exception of traffic, the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact in any of the technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character, including land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, and noise.

As discussed in Chapter 3, "Transportation," the proposed project would result in significant adverse traffic impacts at a number of locations in the traffic study area. However, the majority of the 14 intersections analyzed would either not be significantly impacted or would have impacts that could be mitigated with readily implementable traffic improvement measures, including signal timing changes, parking regulation changes to gain or widen a travel lane at key intersections, lane markings and signage. These measures represent some of the standard traffic

capacity improvements that are typically implemented by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). All unmitigatable and partially mitigated traffic impacts reflect a worst-case condition where a theatre event is sold-out and 84 percent of all patrons arrive in one hour, and 100 percent of all departures leave in one hour. Traffic conditions would be less severe for non-sellout events since fewer patrons would attend. Additionally, providing pre- and post-event programming to stagger event arrivals and departures could improve traffic conditions. Therefore, with mitigation measures in place, the traffic impacts of the proposed project would only occur during infrequent occasions, and would not constitute a change in the overall neighborhood character in terms of traffic.

Together, the proposed actions would facilitate the restoration, expansion, and modernization of the existing vacant Kings Theatre and would provide a modern facility for the presentation of live performances. A renovated and modernized theatre, with active programming and a range of events, would return this vacant cultural facility to productive use, enlivening both the project site, this section of Flatbush Avenue, and adjacent areas. The restored theatre would also serve as a community and City-wide amenity. Therefore, the effects of the proposed action on neighborhood character would constitute a substantial improvement over conditions in the future without the proposed actions. The proposed project would be consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and would add a community resource to a site that has been vacant and deteriorating for decades. The project site and the blocks immediately surrounding it are now and have traditionally been associated with commercial uses. The residential, commercial and community facility uses which are all found throughout the area have long existed alongside each other, and the proposed project would represent a continuation of that history.

In terms of urban design and visual character, the proposed project would have a slightly larger footprint than the existing building. Nevertheless, they would be substantially similar in terms of urban design and visual characteristics—the proposed project would in fact improve the appearance and condition of the existing building—and therefore it would not have a significant adverse impact on urban design and visual character.

The shadows cast by the proposed building would be similar to those cast by the existing building. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse shadow impacts.

Overall, the proposed project would not adversely affect neighborhood character despite increases in traffic. The study area is characterized by Flatbush Avenue, a busy, heavily trafficked commercial corridor, and, as such, the additional traffic impacts would not adversely affect neighborhood character. Instead, the proposed project would improve neighborhood character by transforming the vacant theatre into an active use, enlivening this area of Flatbush Avenue. *